

The City of Eugene has learned that by forming partnerships with the Oregon State Historic Preservation Office, the National Trust for Historic Preservation, the University of Oregon's Historic Preservation Program, Lane Community College, the Eugene Masonic Lodge #11, the Lane County Historical Society, and a committed group of volunteers, the goal of preserving, restoring, and maintaining Eugene's oldest cemetery is rapidly being approached. With the cooperation of these

# The Hope Abbey Mausoleum

## *An Example of Early-20th-Century Community Mausoleums*

*Richa Wilson and Ken Guzowski*

**T**he Hope Abbey Mausoleum is a significant resource located within the Eugene Masonic Cemetery. Listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1980 as Oregon's only example of monumental Egyptian Revival architecture, this structure represents typical problems experienced with community mausoleums built during the early-20th century. At that time, community mausoleums were promoted by entrepreneurial mausoleum companies as the most desirable interment method. Located across the United States, these companies sought to incorporate innovative crypt ventilation methods and construction techniques, even pursuing patents which were often subsequently denied or invalidated.

Typically, mausoleum companies contracted with a cemetery association to erect the structure, reimbursed themselves from the first sales of the crypts, and turned over the mausoleum to the cemetery association after their profit had been realized. These companies were blamed for constructing showy buildings to impress the community and leaving the cemetery associations with inadequate funds for maintenance and repair. Much debate occurred during this time among cemetery managers regarding the method of construction, materials, ventilation, waterproofing, and perpetual care of the community mausoleum. The managers had good reason to be concerned. Unless the mausoleum was taken over by a for-profit business, many of these buildings suffered severe deterioration due to the lack of perpetual care funds and now constitute a challenging opportunity for preservation.

In 1912, the Eugene Masonic Lodge signed a contract giving the Portland Mausoleum Company rights to build a community mausoleum in the cemetery and to sell crypts at a minimum cost of \$200. The contract also stipulated that the "right, title and interest" of the tombs would be conveyed to the Company or to the purchasers of tombs. The contract stipulated that for each crypt sold, the Company would pay the Lodge \$10 to be placed in a fund for maintenance and repair of the mau-



*Numerous zinc monuments in the cemetery remain in excellent condition with the exception of missing panels.*

*Photos by the authors.*

groups and individuals, the Eugene Masonic Cemetery Association has gained the credibility and strength to raise funds and accomplish the daily tasks necessary to restore the site to its former grandeur.

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The Hope Abbey Mausoleum, designed in 1913 by Ellis Lawrence, is Oregon's only example of monumental Egyptian Revival architecture.



Distinctive features of the mausoleum, such as the precast concrete entrance pylon and flanking urns, the bronze doors, and the amber-colored glass windows, suffer from vandalism and a lack of maintenance.

soleum. The Lodge could charge for use of the receiving vaults and the chapel, using the collected funds for maintenance of the cemetery and grounds immediately adjacent to the mausoleum.

Noted Oregon architect Ellis Lawrence saw the opportunities in the mausoleum business for his architectural firm. He invested \$1,500 in the Portland Mausoleum Company stock, with the assurance that his firm would be retained as architects. In 1913, after some misunderstandings regarding this agreement, his firm began preparing plans and specifications for a 250-crypt mausoleum to be located in the Eugene Masonic Cemetery. Before Lawrence was hired to design the Hope Abbey Mausoleum, an advertisement by the Portland Mausoleum Company featured a classically-inspired mausoleum that bears a striking resemblance to the illustration found on their letterhead. Lawrence instead

chose an Egyptian Revival design for the Mausoleum, a style typically associated with funerary architecture. The mausoleum, with its entrance pylon, cavetto cornice, disc-and-wing motif, and lotus blossom urns, represents a style rarely found in Oregon.

Finished in 1914, the Hope Abbey Mausoleum became a popular place of interment for many well-known citizens of Eugene. By the early 1940s, however, the structure was already in a state of deterioration. In the

years since, efforts have been made to address the vandalism, deterioration, and lack of maintenance. During World War II the Hope Abbey Mausoleum Crypt Owners Association Inc. was formed and took responsibility to clean the building, install water, and hire a caretaker. In the 1960s and 1970s, efforts by local citizens sought to protect the mausoleum from vandalism and fraternity hazing by replacing damaged windows with concrete block and repairing broken crypts faces. Stop-gap measures attempted to address the severe problems caused by deteriorated roofing, inoperable drains, and water penetration through the concrete walls.

Despite these periodic preservation attempts, the mausoleum fell into further disrepair. As a result, some family members began moving their loved ones to local memorial parks which represented current trends in funerary practice and were more desirable for their tidy appearance, continual maintenance, and personal attention.

Since 1994, repair and preservation efforts at the Hope Abbey Mausoleum have been one of the goals of the non-profit Eugene Masonic Cemetery Association. A condition assessment, treatment proposal, and cost estimates were developed as part of a recently-completed preservation plan. Backed by the strength of the partnerships formed between local groups and agencies, the National Trust for Historic Preservation, and the Oregon State Historic Preservation Office, the future of the Hope Abbey Mausoleum looks brighter than ever.

